

44 people, very qualified, former ambassadors and other leaders in this country, observing the election that took place in Mexico on Sunday, July 2.

It was an extraordinary experience. I will say that because there were many people who assumed that after 71 years of one-party control by the Institutional Revolutionary Party that the election would once again see the PRI Party, the Institutional Revolutionary Party, prevail and win.

It is no secret that there have been problems with past elections in Mexico. In fact, corruption has been reported very, very widely in past elections. But I am happy to say, having observed what are known as Casias, election voting spots in urban areas in Mexico City, as well as moving into the rural areas, that this was an extraordinarily fair election.

In fact, an organization that was established earlier in the last decade known as the Federal Electoral Institute, the IFE, was a structure which did play a big role in ensuring the fairness of the election.

This also is a great testimonial to a couple of things. One of the individuals is the present president of Mexico, President Ernesto Zedillo, with whom Secretary Baker and Mayor Golding and I met on Saturday morning, the day before the election. In that meeting I conveyed to him what I will share with our colleagues here, and that is the fact that when he was elected president in 1995, having observed the tremendous economic reforms which had taken place in Mexico, he said that his goal was to ensure self-determination and free and fair elections for the people of Mexico.

That is exactly what happened on July 2. I want to extend my very hearty congratulations, as I already have, to president-elect Vicente Fox, who is a representative of the National Action Party, the PAN party, which for years has argued for economic policies which we hold near and dear, and which I am happy to say were embraced in large part by the Institutional Revolutionary Party.

The embrace of those economic policies by the National Action Party played a big role in bringing about free and fair elections. Let me explain that, Mr. Speaker. Back in 1988 when President Carlos Salinas was elected, he made a decision that he was going to pursue broad economic liberalization in Mexico.

What did that consist of? It consisted of privatization, decentralization, closing down State-run enterprises. He took the very bold step in Mexico City of closing down the largest oil refinery because of environmental concerns that existed there.

We saw the economic reforms put into place in the latter part of the 1980s and the early part of the 1990s, and one of the greatest examples of those economic reforms came when we here in this Congress and the Bush and Clinton

administrations put together the North American Free Trade Agreement.

Now, we know that the North American Free Trade Agreement is a much maligned entity, a structure which people criticize often. But I happen to believe that the NAFTA has been a resounding success, and the most recent example of its success was what took place on July 2.

Why? Because as I and many of my colleagues have argued time and time again, whether it is in Mexico or the People's Republic of China, or South Korea or Taiwan or Argentina or Chile, the interdependence of economic and political freedom is key. We saw in the early part of the 1990s major economic reforms take place in Mexico, and we saw on July 2, a week ago this past Sunday, the ultimate in political reform.

I have to say that during those years of economic reform we also saw political reform take place in that for the first time we saw the election of opposition party candidates in local elections, mayors. Fifteen of the 16 largest cities in Mexico have opposition party mayors. We have also seen it in gubernatorial elections.

Mr. Speaker, I believe that we have a tremendous, tremendous opportunity to encourage this transition. We have to be very vigilant. We need to strengthen the already strong relationship that exists with Mexico.

I would like to congratulate all of the nearly 800 people who were on the International Observer team, the International Republican Institute, which again put together a very, very strong operation, and the people of Mexico. They were so enthused about the prospect of being able to vote and have their votes count.

I will never forget the 18-year-old girl whom I saw in a little tiny town called Metatepec, above Atlisco. She said her family for years had worked on behalf of the PAN party, and finally, as we stood over the counting at this little casia and saw 210 votes cast for Mr. Fox and 106 votes for the PRI candidate, Mr. Labastida, we saw by a two to one margin the election of a new party and a new president.

So I wish the people of Mexico extraordinarily well, and I wish the leadership that we have here in the United States God speed in our attempt to do everything that we can to help in this very important transition as we face the many serious challenges that exist on the border and in the relationship between our two important countries.

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ILLEGAL NARCOTICS AND OUR NATIONAL DRUG POLICY

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. SIMPSON). Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 6, 1999, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MICA) is recognized for 60 minutes.

Mr. MICA. Mr. Speaker, usually on Tuesday I come as chairman of the

Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources to talk about the subject of illegal narcotics and our national drug policy.

Tonight is Thursday night. Most of the Members are heading back to their districts; but I have an opportunity to continue sort of, as Paul Harvey says, tell the rest of the story that I left off on on Tuesday, this past Tuesday night and also to kind of update the Congress, my colleagues, and the American people on some of the threats that we face as a Nation from illegal narcotics.

Tonight, I have a little bit different focus, but I am going to try to highlight some of the failures of this presidency and this administration. I have done that before. I do not mean to be critical other than deal with the facts of the situation and deal with the legacy of this administration as it relates to illegal narcotics and the problem with our society.

In just a few minutes, Americans across the country will turn on their nightly news and see, I am sure, clips, Mr. Speaker, of today's talk by the President before the NAACP in Baltimore. Tonight, the American people will hear his speech. I have got a copy of his speech. What is incredible about his speech is what is left out.

Once again, the President, who has only talked about a war on drugs, and I think I have the exact figures, eight times mentioned the war on drugs in 7 years, according to the Nexus research that we conducted on the number of times the President had talked about a war on drugs.

But if one takes the President's speech from today before the NAACP, he does not talk about the war on drugs. The President paints a rosy picture and, again, a copy of the speech that was given to me says "Today we are releasing an annual report on the status of our children. According to the study, the teen birth rate for 15- to 17-year-olds has dropped to the lowest. The birth rate for African-American adolescents has also dropped."

The President talks about everything but one of the most impacting problems that has faced our minority community. What the President is not going to tell the NAACP or recite to the American people are the statistics that have been given to our Subcommittee on Criminal Justice, Drug Policy and Human Resources.

The President will not tell us that according to the national household survey on drug abuse, drug use increased some 41 percent from the beginning of his administration in 1993 to 1998 among young African Americans, an astounding increase.

According to that household survey on drugs, also, another minority population that has been dramatically impacted is the Hispanic minority population with young Hispanics experiencing an increase from 1993 to 1998 of 38 percent. These are facts that should startle every minority parent in this country and were left out of the President's address today in Baltimore.